



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

The **Charlotte Mason Digital Collection** is a not-for-profit database created in 2009-2011 to assist scholars, researchers, educators and students to discover, use, and build upon the Charlotte Mason Collection of archives, journals and books housed in the Armitt Library & Museum (UK). To learn more about this database or to search the digital collection, go to [The Charlotte Mason Digital Collection](#).

Your use of images from the **Charlotte Mason Digital Collection** is subject to a [License](#). To publish images for commercial purposes, a license fee must be submitted and permission received prior to publication. To publish or present images for non-profit purposes, the owner, Redeemer University College, must be notified at cmdc@redeemer.ca and submission of a copy of the context in which it was used also must be submitted to the owner at cmdc@redeemer.ca. Credit lines, as specified in the [License](#), must accompany both the commercial and non-profit use of each image.

Unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal nor may you make multiple copies of any of the digital images. Higher resolution images are available. [Low resolution (150 dpi), single copy printing is permitted: High resolution images for publication can be purchased. Please contact Redeemer University College in writing as specified in the [License](#) to request high resolution images.

While the document originals are housed in the Armitt Library & Museum, Redeemer University College owns the rights to the Digital Images (in jpg/pdf format) of the original archival documents and artifacts. The original Digital Images and database metadata are owned and maintained by Redeemer University College. Multiple images are bound together in PDF Packages. Click [here](#) to download the latest version of Adobe Reader for better viewing. In the PDF, click an image thumbnail to view it.

This project was made possible through collaboration among the [Armitt Library & Museum](#) (Ambleside, UK), [Redeemer University College](#) (Ancaster, Canada) and the [University of Cumbria](#) (UK) and with the financial assistance of the [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada](#).

Need help? If you do **not** see a side-bar with image thumbnails:

Some of the PDF packages are large and will take some time to download. A very large PDF package may open more successfully if you download it first to your desktop. (From inside the database record, right-click on the link to the PDF package and save the link to your desktop.) Once it's on your desktop, you can open it up with a recent version of [Adobe Reader](#).

If you have a Macintosh with Safari, the default program to open PDFs is Preview, which does not open the PDF packets. Mac users need to download [Adobe Reader](#). If this cover page appears without a list of PDF files (either at the side or bottom of the screen), look for a paper clip or a menu option to view attachments. If you click that, you should see a list of the pages in the PDF package.

Viewing files with Linux: This works with the default PDF viewer that comes pre-installed with Ubuntu. While viewing this cover page in the PDF viewer, click "View" on the top toolbar, and check the box that says "Side Panel". That will bring up the side panel. The side panel will show only this cover page. Click the 'arrow' at the top of the side panel, and it will give you the option to view "attachments." If you click that, you should see a list of PDF files, which are the pages in the PDF package.



THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE.

BY D. STEVENSON, M.A.

OF all that is taught in school, English literature is the one subject that especially makes for culture, and yet it is in perhaps the most unsatisfactory position of all. Now, there is a fashion in teaching that largely determines what subjects are to be taught, and to what extent they are to be taught, but, over and above this, a casual first glance at the question would seem to show two good reasons for the present position of English literature, namely, the lack of qualified teachers, and the lack of good text-books. Literature is the bulkiest of all subjects taught, and the fact is that there is usually no time either at Training College or University to give the future teacher such a grasp of his subject as will suffice for purposes of adequate teaching. It takes not only some amount of literary taste, but also years of careful reading before one can even be intelligently aware of the bewildering richness of our English literature; and a teacher of such a subject would be none too well equipped for his work were he to devote a year or two to nothing else. But it is hard for a graduate or graduand to rough it for still one year more on a student's allowance, when he might be earning a tolerable income; especially when all his trouble is not likely to benefit his prospects one whit, as regards either salary or position.

This overwhelming bulkiness of English literature tells wofully in another way. It is a most laborious subject to teach. No previous knowledge of the subject, however great, can be considered sufficient to enable a conscientious teacher to give a single lesson on a great English author without lengthy preparation immediately beforehand. The great biographies must be searched afresh, the works looked through, stray anecdotes and sidelights hunted out, every available means taken to enable the teacher to set forth a lifelike representation of the man and his work. It is not as in Latin, or Greek, or Mathematics, or Science. All these have to do with the *intellect*, and call for conscious exertion on the part of the pupil. But literature has to do chiefly

with *imagination* and *taste*; and for that reason the teacher must do most of the hard work.

Then as regards books, the first-rate books of which a teacher may make use are practically without number; while, so far as I have yet seen, there is scarcely a single text-book for pupils which can be put into the hands of a class with perfect confidence. There are plenty of hand-books of a kind, but the trail of the serpent is over all. They are usually flabby in style, antiquated in criticism, painfully inaccurate as to matters of fact, and, above all, they are "dull, beyond all conception dull." In too many of them the writers are smirkingly self-conscious, infinitely patronizing towards the "brilliant and unfortunate" or "poor and misguided" men of letters; and they are infinitely condescending and pleasant to their youthful readers; and, withal, they awaken the ancient savage in the breast of the teacher, so that he wishes he had them within strangling distance. "Condescension," R. L. Stevenson pithily remarks, "is an excellent thing, but it is strange how one-sided the pleasure of it is! He who goes fishing among the Scots peasantry with condescension for a bait will have an empty basket by evening." And the ordinary school-boy takes as ill with condescension as that same Scots peasantry.

The following, too, is a curious example of the belated march of intelligence among the men who write the ordinary manuals of literature for the young. The article on Burns in one of these compilations of falsehood, fraud, and wilful imposition begins with some such words as these (which I quote from memory, lacerated memory)—"Robert Burns was an Ayrshire ploughman, but beneath the rugged exterior there shone poetic fire as bright and pure as the world has ever seen." It is almost incredible that at this time of day any man could soberly put to paper that ancient piece of egregious humbug which long ago Henry MacKenzie protested against and Lord Jeffrey laughed to scorn. The article on Burns in that monumental work, Ward's *English Poets*, opens with a few pithy sentences on that very error. "That admiration of Burns' poetry as the work of a ploughman," says John Service, "which Jeffrey in his time had occasion to deprecate, in which he could see no more sense than 'in admiring it as if it had been written with his

toes,' has not survived Jeffrey's ridicule. . . . It is not in 1786, in the circle of rank and fashion in Edinburgh in which he appears fresh from the plough—here his courtliness astonishes Dugald Stewart and delights the Duchess of Gordon—it is now, when coming from Olympus, he is introduced to us as from Ayrshire. Though nothing could be more natural than his first appearance in the character of rustic bard, he has so long played a different part that his resumption of it is felt to border upon the grotesque and to be akin to fustian."

He who would write an adequate book on literature must be an artist and a man of culture; he is not a compiler of dead facts, but a depicter of living truth; for a great man's life has a meaning and a significance for all generations. Views, and opinions, and pious reflections, and ill-chosen matters of fact, all huddled together in a hideously shapeless mass, are a very poor substitute for a homogeneous and intelligible account of an author's life and work; an account that would set forth the man as he was, giving all the salient features and omitting all the details that could be omitted, giving something of the human element, something of the infinite humour and pathos that there is in every great life, and rigorously excluding all that would make the book appear the least like a task book. For it cannot too strongly be insisted that the subject is primarily imaginative, not intellectual. In most other school subjects what is chiefly needed for success is hard work, as little emotional as possible; but in literature the love for the subject is the measure of the good to be got from it; and a proper manual for pupils ought to be a book to be loved, not a treatise to be crammed.

It is always much easier to point out defects than to suggest improvements, yet a word or two may be said in a tentative kind of way. For one thing, teachers of English ought surely to be recognized as such. In the ordinary secondary school there are teachers of classics, of science, of music, of French and German, each versed in his own particular group of subjects, and not expected to exert himself to any extent outside that group. But the English group of subjects, that is to say, literature, language, history, and geography, is too often regarded as a simple sort of thing that any teacher may take up in addition to his other

work, without much exertion or preparation at all. The natural result is that the average pupil leaves the secondary school with an extensive ignorance of geography, ditto of history, just enough command of the English language to enable him to write very feeble, frowsy letters, and probably, what is worst of all, a thorough distaste for the classical English literature.

How things came to be so is perhaps not very difficult to explain. Time was when that broadening and deepening and refining of mind, which for shortness we call culture, could only be obtained through a study of the literature of Greece and Rome; such, on the whole, is the plan of education sketched out in Milton's Tractate, and, indeed, no other plan could in that day have so well co-ordinated moral, mental, and aesthetic training. But such a time is long since past. New literatures have arisen, not only embodying the highest excellencies of these older literatures, but characterized by far more advanced moral and intellectual development. Yet these glorious literatures, of which our English literature is the crowning glory—literatures that show forth the human race in all the magnificence of its manly prime, are neglected entirely, or at the best very inadequately dealt with; while the literatures of Greece and Rome, infantile gropings of the human mind, are rigorously specialized and studied as if our whole salvation depended on them. In fact, it would seem as if nothing short of a revolution can effect any appreciable modification of educational methods, so strong is the force of tradition in what ought to be regarded as the most important sphere of human activity. (*"Juventutem recte formare paulo plus est quam expugnare Trojam."*) The Renaissance swept away the fogs of the Middle Ages with fresh breezes from the pagan cities of old. Then for hundreds of years afterwards the ancient classics were still piously studied, long after they might profitably have been cast aside; profitably, indeed, because meanwhile our own literature, born of a sturdier stock, but nursed and fed by them, had grown up more excellent and beautiful than they. Then in our own day the overwhelming exigencies of commercialism have introduced the teaching of science, and given a more important place to modern languages, with the unfortunate result that, as Latin and Greek are still expected to engross much attention from

those who aim at culture, English is in even worse case than before.

No one doubts the advisability of specialist teaching in subjects such as science, music, or modern languages. Yet a moment's reflection cannot but convince one that specialization in English is still more urgently necessary. For it does not take many years of study to make a capable student sufficiently master of any one of these groups to be able to instruct others adequately in the elementary stages of the subjects which he professes. A good professional coach can boil down the more bulky sections of such subjects, reduce them to systems, bring them under comprehensive rules that lay the foundation of complete mastery. But in the case of the English group such a thing is possible only in a very small degree. Leaving out of consideration the other elements of the group, such as history, geography, grammar, and considering only literature, we are compelled to start with the axiom that if a teacher is to deal fairly with the subject he must have read the books of which he speaks, and not merely have studied accounts of them in some manual of literature. To take a parallel instance, no student of painting would ever dream of obtaining his knowledge of the various schools of painting from written descriptions alone; he would rightly feel that only by a study of the original works could he adequately appreciate excellencies or defects. The very best written description of any masterpiece of art gives but a very faint echo of the master's voice; it is an entity without a soul, the very shadow of a shade. But there are several hundred hours' reading in the *Waverley Novels* alone, and he would be a bold man who would read Shakespeare in a fortnight. It cannot be expected that any student should spend his time so lavishly and have no recognized status after all.

There is another thing to be considered. This is an age of public libraries and cheap editions, and the educationalist who ignores the existence of these is guilty of neglecting what in capable hands becomes a most powerful instrument. If a teacher of English literature knows his work and does it, a very large proportion of pupils will search out some book or other bearing on the matter in hand, and they may be trusted to make the best possible use of such opportunities. Thus the direction of a large part of their reading falls

quietly into his hands. But if the teacher merely expounds text-book "literature," the interest of the pupils will be of the most perfunctory kind. Having no incitement to correlate their private reading with what they learn in school, their reading, for read they will, must be quite indiscriminate, and of a kind well fitted to encourage that worst of all vices, dispersiveness.

But, it may not unnaturally be asked, if English literature were given a place of greater honour in the secondary school curriculum would the change, on the whole, be for the better? What particular claims has it to special recognition? Such questions will be best answered by going back at once to the root of the matter and considering what after all is the aim of liberal education. Herbert Spencer's handy definition of that aim as "complete living" will serve to start from. For that is required a correlated and well-balanced development and training of faculty. Hence Lord St. Albans in the essay on "Regimen of Health" defines the educational process as that by which "nature is cherished and yet taught masteries." Primary education is chiefly concerned with the training of the senses, and with such lower faculties of the mind as memory and the reasoning faculty. It is the cherishing of nature, having for its legitimate aim, not the well-informed, refined, imitation-man-of-letters-in-miniature, such as Dr. Blimber loved to form, but purely and simply a healthy, full-blooded young savage, alert and intelligent, master of every possible resource of his embryo nature, ready to enter on that course of education which is eventually to make a man of him. Concerning which matters the elder Caxton had a few very wise remarks to make when Pisistratus came home from school. Secondary education has the task of cherishing nature in the transition from boyhood to youth, and is compelled to concern itself not only with the further development of faculty but also with the conveying of information. What is known as the "modern" section aims at fitting for a commercial career; it teaches modern languages, arithmetic, shorthand, book-keeping, commercial geography, science, and whatever other studies will best fit a youth for business. To revert to Bacon's dictum, the process now is not only cherishing nature, it is teaching masteries. But the "classical" section more especially aims at culture, or, say, a broadness of outlook,

and the fullest possible development of such nobler faculties of the mind as imagination, taste, and the moral faculty. The backbone of this, as things now are, is Greek and Latin. The study of these makes us familiar with great but obsolete civilizations, with literary achievements also, whose magnificence the learner very dimly discerns through the thick mist of a half-known tongue, and from the study of which the average student may perhaps reap scarce any other benefit than that careful discrimination of words which the exercise of translation inculcates. The same time and careful study devoted to his own English literature would acquaint a student with achievements of art more magnificent and varied than aught of antiquity; nay more, would bring him into touch with the most masterful efforts of the most masterful race that the world has ever seen. He, the heir of all the ages, must be prepared to enter into his inheritance, and to carry out the glorious traditions of his race. It is an absurdity that at this time of day the education of a youth should so much concern itself with Latin verbs and Greek particles; there is no training that they give but could be given equally well by a study of our own noble language, from Anglo-Saxon times onwards; and the positive results of the latter course would be immeasurably superior.

It may be rank heresy to speak thus of such dignified veterans as Latin and Greek, but we cannot escape from the grim logic of facts. Things are not now as they were three hundred years ago. Then these were practically the only literatures of the Western World, and the man of culture wisely devoted his attention to them, leaving Hebrew and Arabic and so forth for specialists and pedants; for few subjects well taught has ever been the necessary rule of satisfactory education. But since then our own great literature has arisen. Life is short; if we study the classics as heretofore we must keep on neglecting a literature and a language immeasurably more important than they, and justly merit the scathing criticism of Ruskin that "Modern 'Education' for the most part signifies giving people the faculty of thinking wrong on every conceivable subject of importance to them"; and, vice versa, if we duly recognize our own English literature the "classics" must inevitably take that dignified back seat which the more ancient tongues have so long occupied.

"THE EDUCATION OF A ROYAL PRINCESS."

(Continued from page 41.)

PERSEVERENCE INSTILLED.

"IN the hay-making season the Princess was on the grass every afternoon with her little rake, fork, and cart, industriously employed in collecting the hay, which she would carry to a little distance, and returning, fill her cart again. An anecdote has been related with reference to this amusement which proves that even in pursuing her recreations care was taken to turn every little incident to the benefit of her future character. She had one day completely fatigued herself with filling and refilling her cart, and at length threw down her rake when it was but half loaded; her governess immediately desired her to resume it, and to finish filling her cart; she replied she was too tired. 'But Princess you should have thought of that before you began the last load, for you know we never leave anything unfinished;' and her Royal Highness was most judiciously persuaded to complete the work she had begun.

"Again—riding one day across the garden in her little carriage, a violent storm of wind suddenly arose, and the uncourtly element, little regarding the exalted dignity of the infant heiress of England, very unceremoniously blew her bonnet off her head; the Princess looked surprised and amused, but very handily replaced it; again it nearly flew away; her Royal Highness then appealed to her nurse, saying, 'It wont stay on;'—'Then hold it tight, Princess,' was the reply, and her Royal Highness did so with both her hands, laughing heartily all the way home.

CHARITABLE DISPOSITIONS.

"It was pleasing to observe that amongst all the enjoyments her daily recreations afforded, none seemed more truly to gratify the little Princess than the indulgence of her benevolent and compassionate dispositions. A poor man or woman would frequently follow her carriage into the Palace